

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Clerisse Dacumos, I am a student at Oregon Institute of Technology and I am testifying in support of HB 2262 with the -1 amendments at a funding level of \$5 million.

I come from the U.S. Territory of the Northern Mariana Islands and I have taken the journey to fly away from my home to pursue a college degree. But seeing as I flew in from 5000 miles, I had to find ways to ensure that I would be safe while living on my own for the first time. I knew the documents I required if I wanted benefits, but I was clueless on where to even begin the process. Fortunately, I was recommended a benefits navigator who was able to help me obtain those benefits. I have witnessed friends who were financially affected throughout the past two terms, and I was able to share the knowledge that I received from the benefits navigator. As a freshman, I was ready to face multiple obstacles before being able to begin the process. However, our benefits navigator's assistance has enabled the process to be smooth. It would have been a difficult experience adapting to a brand new place on my own, but our benefits navigator made it possible for comfort and peace to be found with the provided guidance.

Thank you for your time and service to our state. I hope that this critical programming has your support. It truly makes a huge difference in the ability of students to succeed and complete a degree.